were generated by the agricultural crisis and the ensuing famine of 1920-21. To meet the needs of the urban population, the Bolsheviks decreed a forced food levy (December 14, 1920) by which peasants were ordered to deliver their entire surplus to the State. The peasants, retaliating in kind, produced little more than their own needs demanded. Scattered peasant uprisings, together with the Kronstadt rebellion early in 1921, combined to force a change of policy on the new regime. The strict codes of "War Communism" were abrogated and the New Economic Policy (NEP) was launched. Delivery quotas were introduced (amounting to a tax-in-kind) and peasants were encouraged to produce for a flourishing free market.

Thus, for a time under NEP the peasants, who now controlled almost all the arable land, were permitted to enjoy the fruits of their revolutionary exertions. Agricultural production recovered rapidly and a degree of national prosperity resulted. But the Bolsheviks had paid a price for this prosperity — the restoration of free market relations between town and country.

The Leninist Dilemma

The unstable compromise of NEP postponed the inevitable clash between the "proletarian dictatorship" and the victorious peasant revolution. Two parallel developments were rapidly to hasten the impending struggle: throughout the NEP period (1921-28) the peasants tightened their hold on the land, many of them growing relatively prosperous, and thereby fortifying their gains. At the same time the Bolsheviks were tightening their hold on the political machinery of the State and turning their party into a monolithic organization capable of an outright offensive against the rest of the country. Thus, the stage was set for the gigantic economic struggle of the late twenties.

The issue at stake between the Bolsheviks and the peasantry was only partly ideological. The conflict between the Bolshevik belief in the superior efficacy of large-scale "socialist" farming and the peasants' allegiance to his traditional "way of life" was important, but this conflict was subordinated to another one which was economic in character. The peasants and the Bolshevik regime faced each other across the table on which the grain produce of Russia was negotiated. And it was, in fact, in the realm of economics

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578 185 that the two antagonists met and clashed in the "war" which resulted in collectivized agriculture.[18]

The problem which the Bolsheviks had to deal with may be briefly stated. NEP had insured the continued political existence of the regime; but salvation had been achieved at a great price. To obtain a sufficient supply of agricultural produce to feed the rising urban population and, if possible, to permit acceleration of industrial growth, it was necessary to provide increased incentives for the peasantry. But to provide incentives for an increased supply of produce to the cities, it was also necessary to create an industry capable of supplying peasants with the consumer goods and agricultural machinery they demanded in exchange. Without recourse to foreign capital, this, in turn, was impossible, unless a steadily increasing supply of agricultural produce was guaranteed.

The problem of breaking this vicious circle occupied the thoughts of the best Party theoreticians throughout the period of NEP. Some, like Bukharin, suggested a solution bearing some resemblance to the pre-Revolutionary policies of Witte and Stolypin — a "gradualist" approach to industrialization, encouragement of the more efficient middle peasant producers, and limited recourse to foreign capital. Trotsky, as the leader of the radical Left Wing, called for an immediate drive for industrialization in which the peasants would absorb the major shock. The theoretical debate rose to its climax in the late twenties, coinciding with the final victory of the Stalinist faction of the Bolshevik Party and the resurgence of the agricultural crisis in a new form.[19]

The Pre-collectivization Crisis

185 471 423 The Stalinist "solution" to the agricultural crisis (collectivization) did not proceed according to a predetermined plan or theory. Rather, it was developed pragmatically as a response to critical

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[18] Lazar Volin, a foremost American student of Soviet agriculture, also assigned priority to the practical, as opposed to the ideological basis of collectivization. He explained the Communist attachment to the *kolkhoz* in this way: "First, the practical or pragmatic reasons . . . [revolving] around the need for large supplies of cheap agricultural products to feed and clothe the growing industrial population and the army . . . Second, an ideological predilection for agrarian collectivism, rooted in the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist dogma." Lazar Volin, "Agricultural Organization," *Soviet Economic Growth*, Abraham Bergson (editor), White Plains, N. Y., 1953, p. 286.

[19] A reliable account of the heated Party economic debate may be found in Maurice Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development since* 1917 (New York, 1948), pp. 208-229, and of the political implications of the debate in Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* (Oxford, 1949), pp. 294-304.

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But in the end these possessions stirred the envy not merely of ambitious and worldly men but also of the land-hungry poor. To be sure the Abbot of a flourishing monastery might correctly point out that the revenues did not enrich the monks, who normally lived under his guidance by an austere religious rule. These religious in their bare cells did not taste the fine vintages pressed from monastery grapes carefully tended by brothers who rose at four for Matins and then expended themselves zealously for the cause of God. Nevertheless the critics were not by any means only emancipated spirits who found moral discipline irksome and the Church old-fashioned. They were also earnest, weather-beaten peasants, with no soil to till, and often desperately poor, who understandably looked upon Church estates with a covetous eye. And of course everywhere the well applauded and sharp-tongued ideologies of the time—Marxism, Nationalism, Nihilism—were allied against the Church, often looked upon by the seemingly more enlightened folk of those days as the heritor of a creed outworn. And it must be admitted that sometimes a segment of the clergy, grown comfortable and worldly, acted as if they thought so, too.

Protestantism inside the old Empire clung to the enclaves which had been established during the era of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. Despite the strife incident to the Thirty Years' War both Lutheranism and Calvinism maintained themselves resolutely in Hungary, for example, so that prior to the outbreak of World War II Catholics in that country constituted about 67 per cent of the population, while Protestants numbered nearly 27 per cent and adhered to both the Lutheran and the Calvinist tradition. In Czechoslovakia the situation was relatively the same, though the number of Protestant groups was greater. A considerable part of the population —6 per cent in 1932—professed no religion of any kind. Another characteristic of the old Empire was the presence of the

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visions were included in the peace treaties with Hungary and Bulgaria, and the states that had been created or enlarged as a result of the war assumed similar obligations. The provisions for the protection of minorities were concerned with the use of language in schools and courts, the practice of religion, and the equitable administration of social security. Their implementation by the respective governments was supervised by a Minorities Commission in the League of Nations, and a system of petitions was established for bringing injustices to the attention of the League. Although the principles underlying this system represented a great advance over pre-war practice, the efforts at implementation failed to meet the needs of the situation. In many cases the minorities continued to be discriminated against, and even when they were not, nationalist movements sponsored by neighboring countries often proved irresistible. As a result, the problem of minorities became one of the fundamental sources of political instability in Eastern Europe.

Another unfavorable factor was that richer families sent their children to foreign universities, especially to France, Germany, and Great Britain, while there was little student exchange among the Eastern European countries themselves. Educated people knew a great deal about Western Europe, but much less about neighboring states and peoples. Naturally, this was even more so among nations which had been enemies in the First World War and which now fiercely condemned their citizens if they praised the culture or progress of a former enemy. However, this situation was not unique to this region. It was characteristic of Europe as a whole and, like the development of nationalism and industry, moved from West to East.

Many of Eastern Europe's difficulties stemmed from the instability of its political life. Governments changed constantly and political parties fought each other to the last breath. Due to the many changes of government, an unwhole-

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somely large proportion of state funds was used for political competition. Taxes were high and the entire taxation system was geared to make the poor people pay for the political and economic program of the government or of the ruling classes. Planning was poor and administration far from efficient. Bohemia-Moravia had inherited from Austria a relatively competent administrative machinery, and Hungary's was organized along nineteenth-century lines. Administrative systems in former Russian and Turkish areas were a continuation of the previous imperial regimes, and were considered definitely the worst in Eastern Europe. Inefficiency and corruption mitigated somewhat the dictatorial character of these administrations. Bribery was customary and necessary on every level and affected the poor and the minorities. The problem of corruption was most serious in high official circles. Often the biggest fortunes were made in politics through embezzling discretionary funds that were left at the disposal of government members. Selling protective tariffs to industrialists in order to receive shares from foreign companies for concessions was a prevalent practice. Administrative officials were endowed with the nickname "bicyclists," which carried the implication that these officials trampled upon their subordinates and bowed before their bosses.

This attitude and the belief that the masses should support all projects of the ruling circles produced a harsh conflict of interests between the bourgeoisie, the mixed aristocratic and middle class, and the industrial workers and peasants. The fundamental conflict, however, was between the bureaucracy and the peasantry. The great differences in the cultural levels in many of the Eastern European countries made things worse. Different religious and ethnic groups and contrasting social standards contributed to regional hostilities and did nothing to facilitate the task of the administrators. The fault lay not alone with the rulers and administrators as is so often supposed by Western authors and statesmen. The people in

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general were slow to learn and to develop their abilities. 578 ● They did not cooperate with regulations and laws even when such were to their own benefit, an attitude that stems from many centuries of oppression.

IV

It is difficult to say what turn the development of Eastern 648 Europe might have taken if, after gaining full freedom and independence in the twentieth century, the countries of this region had been given the chance to progress in a peaceful era. The countries of Eastern Europe, immediately after recovering from the traumatic depression of the 1930's, were confronted with German and Russian imperialism without even a chance to settle down for a period of healthy evolution. Unhappily, the Western European powers, after their unfortunate appeasement policy towards Hitler which completely confused the Eastern European nations, joined hands too tightly with communist Russia. The Eastern European states, semidemocratic, semidictatorial, balancing between bankruptcy and future recovery, between socialism and aristocratic-bourgeois traditions, were a brutally realistic mirror of Europe's modern revolution.

Germany used all means possible to influence and to domi- 648 nate the area. Basing its actions upon meticulous studies of 439 the history, geography, politics, economics, social life, and cultural habits of the respective countries, Germany gained influence through the use of economic penetration, antisemitism, social-revolutionary propaganda, antibolshevism, and diplomacy. The Eastern European states could not very well defend themselves against such brilliantly conducted infiltration. Nor could their economics develop satisfactorily when American, British, French, and Swiss businessmen were completely disinterested in trade and investment in Eastern Europe since the prospects for profit were not great in that

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area. It is unjust to accuse the Eastern European states of favoring Germany when this country alone was willing to trade with them and did not demand hard currency payments. Germany bought large quantities of Eastern European products and forced the sellers to buy from her various articles, including gadgets, luxury goods, and many other products, the prices of which were beyond the purchasing power of the buyers.

Antisemitic movements in Eastern Europe often received aid in the form of money from Nazi Germany which practice increased dependence upon that country. Through the various Nazi-supported parties in almost every country and through fifth column organizations, the Germans instigated conflicts between the ruling classes and the dissatisfied social elements. At the same time antibolshevik propaganda was strongly and successfully supported by German diplomacy.

Czechoslovakia, in 1938, was the first to lose her independence. Poland fell in 1939, and Yugoslavia followed in 1941. The years 1939 through 1944 were truly critical for Eastern Europe. The German-Russian imperialistic pincers tightened steadily. Nazi Germany won easy diplomatic victories over the Western European powers whose conciliatory policies were astounding. Even more astounding was their sudden turn to anti-German propaganda and war. Squeezed between the arbitrary policy of the Western powers and the expanding German and Soviet giants, the Eastern European nations had no other choice than to muddle through. Apprehensively watching an alliance of giants and often impressed by the achievements of these powers, they tried to appease them, aid them, or fight them.

Peace economy was turned into war economy. This decreased unemployment, and war losses decreased it even further. The most active age group, already reduced by the slump in birth rate after the First World War, was thinned even more. Youth, accustomed to tackling problems in terms

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178 years before the First World War in the Austro-Hungarian
563 monarchy. At the same time, there was relatively little competition for the services of men of high talent on the part of industry, applied science, or practical politics, since all of these activities remained relatively underdeveloped.

• 578 The coincidence of intellectual precocity with widespread
565 social and economic backwardness led to widespread experiences of frustration. Intellectuals, not unlike the ancient philosopher Plato, dreamed of equalling one day the power and prestige of the aristocracy, for which they lacked the land holdings and family connections; and they dreamed of equalling the comforts and securities of the bourgeoisie—the upper middle class—without either owning a bourgeois amount of property or devoting a bourgeois proportion of their time and attention to money-making or to business matters. They resented the influence of the church and the clergy in the rural areas, without being either willing or able to devote a major part of their own time and attention to the needs of the country population. Almost all classes of society had come to desire Western standards of income, comfort, security, and power, without possessing as yet either the means or the skill necessary to produce them. And all these discontented groups and individuals, pushed forward by the fundamental incongruities in their social evolution, turned to politics and to the state as a remedy for their frustrations.

IV

186 Under these conditions, no type of government and no
631 size of political unit could for long live up to the rising level of popular expectations and the increasingly pressing demands of society. Already, before the year 1914, large states as well as small, national states as well as international, became increasingly strained by social tensions.

In a supra- or multinational state, such as the Austro-

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tantly or not at all. Unemployment became worse than it had ever been.

Thus social tensions persisted or grew worse. Sometimes they appeared as growing tensions between left and right, with the political middle-of-the-road parties increasingly threatened by fascists or by communists. Sometimes they appeared as tensions between different nationality groups, such as between Serbians and Croatians or between Czechs and Germans. Often the same angry and frustrated individuals could be found backing communism in one year, extreme nationalism in another, and some more or less supranational fascism in a third. Whole districts voted for right-wing radical candidates in one election and for left-wing radicals in another. Nationalism in Eastern Europe was thus the symptom of a more fundamental maladjustment, even though nationalistic policies, once adopted, often served to make this maladjustment worse. Nationalistic governments, as well as most other governments in this region, were becoming increasingly unpopular and during the 1930's showed increasing reluctance to face their own voters. By 1939, before the first German or Russian soldier stepped on their soil, every country of Eastern Europe, with the exceptions of Finland and Czechoslovakia, had succumbed to some form of dictatorship. Nationalism had thus failed to cure the fundamental maladjustments of Eastern European political and economic life. From some points of view its failure was hardly less shattering than the failure of the supranational empires that had preceded it.

It was nationalism which first undermined and in part destroyed the traditions of property and the respect for property in Eastern Europe. This attack against property began as early as the era of Prince Bismarck in Germany. The so-called Polish legislation sponsored by the German government and by the German nationalists during and after the Bismarck era showed scant respect for the property